

19 #8

A  
**SERMON**

Preached at

*St. Bride's Church, Dublin,*

*April 17. 1698.*

Upon Occasion of a

**R E S O L U T I O N**

Taken in This City,

Of Putting

**The Laws in Execution**

**AGAINST**

*Vice and Immoralities.*

---

By **PET. BROWNE, B.D. Sen. Fellow** of Trin. Col. DUBLIN.

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Dublin, Printed by *Joseph Ray*, and are  
to be Sold at his Shop in *Skin-*  
*ner-Ro.*      DCXCVIII.

A heavy Burthen is easily carried by the assistance of other shoulders. Husband and Wife should neither be proud flesh nor dead flesh. You are fellow-members, therefore should have a fellow feeling. While one stands safe on the shore the other should pity him that is tost on the sea. Sympathy in sufferings, is like a Dry House in a Wet Day.

3. Chuse such a One as may be serviceable to your salvation. A Man may think he hath a saint, when he hath a Devil; but take heed of a Harlot, that is false to thy Bed and of a Hypocrite, that is false to thy God.

*Secondly*, To those Women that have Husbands; how to use them. In two things.

1. Carry your selves towards them with Obedience. Let their Power command you, that their Praise may commend you. Though you may have your Husbands Hearts, yet you must not have their Heads; as you will his Love, so you should love his VVill. Till the Husband leaves Commanding, the VVife must never leave Obeying. As his Injunctions must be Lawful, so her subjection must be Loyal.

2. VVith Faithfulness. In Creation, God made not one woman for many Men, nor many women for one Man. Every VVife should be to her Husband, as *Eva* was to *Adam*, a whole World of Woman; and every Husband should be to his Wife, as *Adam* was to *Eva*, a whole World of Men. When a River is divided into many Channels, the main Current starves.

To conclude, Good servants are a great Blessing; good Children a greater Blessing; but a good Wife is the greatest Blessing; and such a Help let him seek for her that wants one, let him sigh for her that hath lost one. let him take pleasure in her that enjoys one. *And the Lord God said, It is good, &c.*

F I N I S.

1978

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*The Reader is desired to take Notice,  
That the Third Head was Omitted in the  
Speaking, and part of the Second for Bre-  
vity. And that the Sentences under the  
Second Head in an Italick Character, are  
Mr. Boyse's, in his Sermon Dedicated to the*  
**SOCIETIES FOR REFORMA-  
TION.**

## NUMBERS XXV. II.

*Phinehas the Son of Eleazer, the Son of Aaron the Priest, hath turned my Wrath away from the Children of Israel (while he was Zealous for my sake among them) that I Consumed not the Children of Israel in my Jealousie.*

**W**Hen the *Israelites* came to their last Station in order to pass over *Jordan*, the Neighbouring Countries were terrified with their Numbers; and therefore the King of *Moab* combin'd with the *Midianites* against them. And, as was very usual with most Heathen Princes upon the like Occasions he sends for *Balaam* a Man famous for Divinations, to consult about the Event, and Encourage his

B                      People

People with a Promise and Assurance of Success. But by the Order and Inspiration of GOD, he prophesies quite the contrary, and fore-tells the Destruction of *Moab*, and the Neighbouring Countries by the *Israelites*; for which he was sent home with Disgrace.

But tho' he could not speak any thing to the King but what GOD had put in his Mouth, yet his Affection for the *Midianites* (who were probably his Country-men, becaule we read he return'd home, and afterwards was Kill'd among them) made him give their Enemies the only Advice which cou'd possibly injure the Children of *Israel*; and that was, To send many of their Women into the Camp, which by their Beauty and Allurements might entice the *Israelites* first to Unlawful Marriages and Whoredom, and then to prophane the Name and Worship of GOD by their Idolatry. And accordingly the Wile took, and as we read in the first Verse of this Chapter, *The Men began to commit Whoredom with the Daughters of Moab.*

Upon this, GOD sent a Plague among them; and *Moses* by his Command,  
gave

gave positive Orders throughout the Camp to all the Governours and Leaders, that they shou'd put to death all those who were guilty of these Crimes. But as appears from the manner of the Relation, the Number and Quality of those who fell in League with the Heathen Women was so great, that Execution was delay'd; so that they out-brav'd the Laws, and struck a Terror into all those who were well affected, and had refrain'd from those lewd Practices. In-  
 somuch that *Zimri*, a Person of Quality among them, in open Contempt of the Laws and Magistrates, brought a *Midianitish* Woman along with him in the sight of all the Congregation. *Phineas* seeing this, follows them into the Tent, and kills them both in the very Act of Fornication: Then the Plague was stay'd, and this Action of *Phineas* said to be the Cause of it, *For Phineas the Son &c.*

Being at this Time to discourse concerning those Persons, who have bravely set themselves to give Vice and Immoralities an open profess'd Opposition in this City, and to stem that current of Wickedness which threatned to over-whelm us; I have made choice of these words,

that I might propose to you this Excellent Pattern of Zeal ; that you might see how this was commendable in him, and how far it is imitable by you. And that I might lay before you those several things which in this Text are suggested, as well for your Direction and more Prudent Management, as for your Encouragement in that Worthy Design of yours ; which if rightly manag'd, must be very pleasing and acceptable to GOD and all good Christians. And therefore,

I. The first thing observable from these words is, That Persons even in a Private Capacity, may and ought to shew their Zeal for GOD against open and bare-fac'd Impiety. For tho' *Phinehas* was the High-Priests Son, yet we read of no Place nor Power that he had, till he was afterwards employ'd as Commander against the *Midianites*. So that this Action was not proper either to his Place or Quality, but as he was an *Israelite* ; and he had the Execution of the Laws in his Power no otherwise, than by vertue of that General Command at the 5th Verse, which was common to others as well as him. And accordingly tho' *Moses* mention only *Phinehas*, as being

ing the first that led the way; and *Zimri* as being a Person of the greatest Quality of those that were slain: yet *Josephus* relating this Passage says, That a great number of other young Men being Animated by this courageous Action, took heart, and rose up in open Opposition to the Transgressors, and Executed the Sentence of *Moses* upon them all.

But tho' this Command was General, yet there was this Peculiar in that Action of *Phinehas*, that the Command being directed to the Judges and Leaders to destroy every one their Men (i. e.) to punish those under their Jurisdiction *Zimri* being Head of a chief House among them, and therefore not so immediately under the Power of others, thought to carry it with a high Hand; to practice his Wickedness openly himself, and by that means to encourage it in others. But *Phineas* being acted with a Zeal for GOD and the Command of *Moses*, undertook the Exploit, and Executed that Sentence upon him, which he neglected to Execute upon others.

Now this gave occasion to the Sect of the Zealots among the Jews, whose Power was for a long time very sacred among

among them; and they had a right to execute the Sentence of the Law upon any Person they apprehended in the very act of Blaspheming, or Prophaning the Temple &c. which was all built upon a tradition they held from *Moses* grounded as they conjectur'd, upon this action of *Phineas*.

And we have some instances in Scripture of particular persons, who upon extraordinary occasions have by a Zeal inflam'd and a mighty Impuls upon their Spirits, become the Executioners of God's immediate Vengeance upon Bold and Scandalous Sinners. As particularly that of *Elias* destroying all the Prophets of *Baal*; and *Matathias* slaying the Jew that offered Incense upon a Heathen Altar. And that action of our Saviours twice repeated, of driving the Buyers and Sellers out of the Temple, tho' he did it by the privilege of his Kingly Power; yet he was suppos'd by the Jews to do it upon this principle of Zealotism: For otherwise they had a fair Accusation against him for a Riotous and Illegal Assault; and being but a private Person taking upon him the Office of a Magistrate.

But

Now this fiery temper of the Zealots was very commendable, and sometimes necessary under the Law; yet it is not practicable in that degree under the tender and merciful Spirit of the Gospel. For then their Obedience was external, and therefore required futable Punishments in this life; But now the inward purity of our Souls is requir'd, and nothing can make Men afraid of sinning in their Minds but a clear revelation of Hell, and a full prospect of eternal damnation; and therefore these are the only terrors of the Lord now. In the first times of the Gospel indeed, death was inflicted upon malicious obstinate Offenders by a supernatural power; but this, with all the other acts of God's extraordinary dispensations have ceased, so that all such mighty impulses pretended now a-days are only from the Devil.

The Gospel proposes no temporal Punishments for the sins of Men, but such as follow the nature of the Sins themselves; And therefore the severest Ecclesiastical Censures are the Exposing Men to shame, and Cutting them off from the Body of the Church, and so consigning them over unto the judgment of the Great Day.

But

But tho' it be now utterly unlawful in us to punish Vice in others, unless where we have Authority our selves, or derive it from the Laws of the Land: Yet thus much is very evident from this action of *Phineas*, and those other instances of Zeal consequent to it; that all Men may, and ought to shew their Zeal for the glory of God, and discouragment of Vice, by all those means which are permitted by the Gospel. And there are several ways of doing this, As by shewing our dislike to it at all times, and in all persons; by reproving the sins of others whenever it is proper and seasonable, and that we have any hopes our Reproofs will do good; and lastly by doing all that in us lies, to promote the Execution of those good and wholsom Laws which are Enacted against impudent Profaness and Impiety.

And that which makes this last way of shewing our Zeal so necessary now, is because multitudes who go by the name of Christians, have cast off all fear of any thing else but Temporal Laws; all the Methods of the Church against such Scandalous Offenders have quite lost their force.

There

There was a time, and O! that we might see it in our days, when Men knew the strength of Ecclesiastical Censures; when they were sensible that God was with his Church in all its Judiciary Proceedings, ratifying all its just Sentences, binding of them in Heaven, and recording of them there to be produce'd at the great Day of Accounts. But now they regard nothing but what they feel, so that there is no way left of dealing with them, but by those Human Laws which they dread more than Damnation; and the Power of the Civil Magistrate, which they fear more than that God who is a Consuming Fire.

II. The second thing I shall observe from these words is, That the nature of a true Zeal consists in our Indignation at what is plainly against the Laws of God, and evidently sinful. That instance we have of a true Zeal here was against Adultery, Fornication, and the Idolatrous worship of *Baal Pehor*; which as one observes from the signification of the name, was an Idol purposely contrived to excite People to Lewdness and Impurity by the sight of it: and therefore his Zeal was approved by God in these words,

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while

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C while

~~an~~ *while he was zealous for my sake among them.* This of being incens'd at the known and *uncontested* sins of Men is the being truly zealous for the sake of God; and not when People are transported against things dubious, and of no great moment; when they lay out all their Zeal against Circumstances, and things in their own nature lawful or indifferent. There is more requir'd in order to a true Zeal than meer heat of our Blood, and a great indignation of mind: People may be thus far zealous in a bad, as well as a good Cause; For the Midianites were no doubt very zealous against the Israelites, when they prostituted their Women of greatest Quality to destroy them. So that being level'd at things which are plainly against the Laws of God, is the only distinguishing mark of a true Zeal. And it is more or less true according to the evidence and plainness of those Precepts of God against which the sins are committed. When the things against which we are zealous are dubious, our Zeal if violent is blamable; if the things are of no great moment or indifferent, then our Zeal is trifling and frivolous; if the things are in their own nature lawful, then our Zeal is downright sinful.

Now

Now Fornication and Adultery, Cursing and Swearing, Blasphemy and Profaness, Drunkenness and Gluttony, Unjust Gain and Oppression, Rebellion and Disobedience to Laws and Government, Breaking of Amity among Christians, and Dissolving of Unity in the Worship of GOD; These and such-like are openly and palpably against the express Commands of GOD : and therefore these are the things against which our Zeal shou'd be levell'd. For otherwise we have just cause to suspect that it proceeds from Natural Temper, or Humor, or Interest, or Ignorance and Mistake, or from the Delusions of the Devil, and our own Imaginations : But in things of that grois. nature, our Zeal is always Safe and Commendable.

And therefore here, by the way, I ought not to omit the Just Commendation of the late Zeal of our Dissenting Brethren, in their hearty Endeavours, and liberal Contributions for carrying on this Design of putting the Laws in Execution against such of those Vices as are made liable to Temporal Punishments. Had they begun this Work, no one could have said, *That it was the Fa-*

*etious Design of a Party*, but a True and Regular Zeal ; because the Instances are such as are plainly and directly against the Laws of GOD, as well as those of the Land ; and not such as are Dubious and Indifferent in their own nature : No, we commend them for their hearty Concurrence with us, and we hope not to be out-done by them in this good Work.

But since all this visible Piety, and Zeal against Irreligion and Profaness, hath first appear'd *among the Members of the Establish'd Church*, it must be Acknowledged that our Constitution and Principles are better Calculated for the Encouragement of all Vertue and Goodness, and the Suppression of Vice among them ; and nothing can possibly be a greater Inducement to all well-disposed People to joyn in its Communion, than to see what a Natural Tendency it hath to make People truly Good and Vertuous.

We must both of us with Sorrow of Heart confess, That our Separate Communions have been the immediate Natural Cause of all that *Torrent of Profaness and Irreligion, Immorality and Lewd-*  
ness,

ness, which during the two late Reigns came in upon these Lands with an Irresistable violence; which hath so broke the Sinews of all Ecclesiastical Discipline, and depriv'd the Church of that Power Originally inherent in it by a Divine Right deriv'd from Christ himself; that we are both of us now forc'd to fly to Temporal Laws for the Suppression of such Sinners, who having no fear of GOD before their Eyes, must necessarily despise the Church.

And 'tis a Melancholly Consideration, that the Incorporation of the Church into the Civil State, by a Constitution of Government in it self so Excellently Contriv'd, as to reserve to the Apostles Suecessors, all their Divine Right and Primitive Authority in Matters purely Ecclesiastical; and yet in a due Subordination to the Civil Magistrate; shou'd, by our Divisions, be brought to this, that they shall now act rather as Members of the State, than as Governours of the Church. And that the Addition of Temporal Laws in a Kingdom of Christians, which were design'd to give strength to her Censures, shou'd by this means come to have a quite contrary Effect, to swallow them all up, and Resolve

solve them almost wholly into Civil Power : Infomuch that she hath only her Doctrine left for Ornament, but little of that Original Power of Defending her self, and Excluding all Impudent Impiety, Profaness, and Irreligion out of the Fold of Christ. So that there were generally better Christians in the Church, when it was among Infidels, than now that there are so many Infidels suffer'd to be profest and actual Members of the Church.

We must both I say acknowledge that these open and scandalous Sins of profest Christians, are the dismal Consequences of our Divisions; and therefore that there is a heavy and unsupportable Load of Guilt, where-ever the just and true Cause of them lies : And that it will lie either on their side or ours, is so plain a Truth that we can neither of us avoid it. I am not now going to dispute where, But it follows from hence, that it is matter of infinite Concern to each of us to be very well Assur'd, that it doth not lie at our Door. There is not any thing in the world that we ought to be better resolv'd in ; For if there be not such a manifest violation of the known positive Laws of GOD requir'd amongst

us, that they cannot communicate with us, without plainly transgressing of them; then all their Zeal for Purer Worship will never be accounted a Zeal for the sake of GOD. And if the Constitution of our Church doth oblige them to the committal of one Sin contrary to the known positive Laws of God, and the *Interest of Practical Holiness*, then we must take all that load of Guilt upon our selves.

Sure I am on which side soever the Cause lies, that our Uniting in the Worship of God, and Celebration of the Sacraments, wou'd be the most effectual means of Suppressing all this insolent and hardened Impiety; and nothing else can do it intirely and lastingly. And since we are all United *In the main Interest of Practical Holiness*, what then remains toward the perfecting our Concord, but that in all these things which do not relate to *Practical Holiness*, we in all Humility submit to the Wisdom of our Superiors? Who as is confessed require us to be guilty of nothing which is contrary to it. And therefore I hope all People are now convinced that they may joyn with us without committing a Sin: And if so, this Inference is very plain,

plain, That it is a Sin not to joynt  
with us.

And since we are so *happily agreed in all those things that are great and valuable*, why should we break Communion for those that are not so? O! that GOD would put it into the Hearts of our Dissenting Brethren, to weigh these heavy Consequences in the Ballance, against *those few small Differences in Opinion or Practice for which we yet differ*, that what remains might no way obstruct our Joynt Communion, and hinder us any longer from going into the House of GOD as Friends together. This wou'd strike an Awe upon bold and hardened Sinners; and then *wou'd the Reformation of these Scandalous Vices we now set our selves against begin where our Corruption did before*: And thus *by becoming an United, we shou'd become a Flourishing and Happy People*. GOD grant that our United Endeavours for the Prosecution of Vice and Wickedness, may be a happy Means of Uniting us, not only *in our Affections to one another*, but in the Publick Worship of GOD, and Celebration of his Sacraments; which is the Necessary Condition of that Unity which alone will render us

one

one Church and People in the fight  
of GOD.

III. The Third thing observable  
from this Passage is, That our Zeal for  
the cause of God in all instances what-  
soever, should contain it self within  
those bounds prescrib'd by himself. As  
it must be against things plainly contra-  
ry to the Laws of God, so the manner  
of expressing it must be agreeable to them  
too. *Phinehas* is not commended here  
because he was too hasty to expect a  
legal Process, for the Command was po-  
sitive that they should not stay for it;  
but for the speedy execution of an ex-  
press Law with the hazard of his life, and  
because he took it upon him when no  
one else dar'd to do it. And therefore  
that must needs be a blind and prepos-  
terous Zeal which sets up for reformation ei-  
ther of Manners, or Discipline by methods  
unwarrantable, either by the Laws of  
God or Man. The Zealots among the  
Jews were very good and useful in their  
first original, and therefore in great ve-  
neration while they kept within the just  
and prescrib'd limits of the Law: But  
afterwards they became a most dange-  
rous and pernicious Sect to the whole

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polity of the Jews, they committed all manner of Villanies under pretence of Reformation, and put to death many of the chief and worthiest men of the Nation.

And therefore men can't be too cautious in this point, for whenever our Zeal prompts us to act in opposition to any of the Laws of God, or the innocent Laws of Men, 'tis all madness and fury. Our Zeal may carry us beyond the Commands of God, but not contrary to any one of them: as in this action of *Phinehas*, it was more than his duty to slay one of another Tribe, but it was however according to the express Command for otherwise it had been an act of Murder. Our Zeal in many instances may prompt us to do more than God requires of us, but never to do any thing that he forbids, for this will be reforming the sins of Men by others in our Selves.

Now as to your observance of human Laws in the management of your Zeal against Offenders, I need say but little they are a Fence to themselves, and therefore regard every Man hath to his own quietness and safety, will oblige him in prudence

mitted all not to come under the lash of them, by  
 tence of taking any course of Fraud or Violence  
 many of that is unwarrantable.  
 the Na-

But as to the Laws of GOD, the most  
 effectual way of keeping within due  
 Bounds in this Undertaking, is by a  
 Preservation of your *Sincerity* and *Hum-*  
*ility*.

1. And first as to your *Sincerity* in  
 this good Work, you must take care  
 that you are prompted to it out of a  
 true Concern for the Glory of GOD, and  
 Veneration for his Laws ; together with  
 a Concern for the good of your Coun-  
 try, a tender Regard for the Souls of  
 other Men, and the discharging of a  
 good Conscience in doing all that in you  
 lies to the promoting of these Ends. If  
 these be the Motives that spur you on  
 to give insolent Profanefs and Impiety  
 an open Opposition, 'tis a glorious En-  
 terprize ; and you may hope that GOD  
 who hath begun this good Work by you,  
 will bring it to a good Perfection. This  
 of a pure Intention alone can Entitle  
 you to the Blessing of GOD both here  
 and hereafter ; and 'tis a great Pity that  
 any one shou'd be the Instrument of so  
 D 2 sub-

substantial a good, and yet lose the Reward of it.

2. And secondly, As to your *Humility*, this is to be secured both in respect of your selves, and in your *Department to others*. As to the first, You must not value your selves upon this, as being more holy than other Men; for Zeal against the Sins of other People, tho' it be good and commendable, yet is a very bad Rule of judging of the degrees of Piety in our selves; and yet of all Vertues it hath the directest Tendency to raise Mens Opinions of their own Piety, and puff them up with Spiritual Pride. Therefore let the notice we take of the Sins of others, make us rather reflect upon our selves, who are Sinners as well as they, tho' perhaps not in the same Instances, or in the same degrees. And the most effectual way of preserving an humble Sense of our own Religion and Performances, is to compare our selves with the Law of GOD, and not with the Lives of other Men; then we shall see so many Defects in our selves, that we shall never be proud of not being as wicked as other Men are.

As it respects *Others*, you must shew your Humility by Obedience and Submission to the Magistrates in all your Proceedings ; and by paying all Defe-  
 rence and Respect to your Superiors, notwithstanding your Evidence against them ; by avoiding all Affectation of Singularity and Moroseness, and never insulting or expressing any indecent Passion against Peoples Persons ; for 'tis not them, but their Sins you prosecute. There is a manner of accusing People which tho' it want no Courage or Resolution, yet discovers Meekness and Humility ; and then it becomes the brightest Zeal when it hath this Undaunted Resolution, without any mixture of the Heat and Fire of our Temper.

There is a way of Prosecuting the Sins of Others so as to convince even themselves that 'tis from no Prejudice to their Persons, but a Zeal for the Glory of GOD, and a tender Concern for the good of their Souls : And therefore whenever this End can be effected without it, and that you have just ground to think that their Conversion can be wrought by Secret Admonition, you are not to expose them to Publick Disgrace  
 and

and Punishment. And you are to have such a tender Regard to the Reputation of others, that you accuse not any Person upon groundless Reports, or meer Suspensions; for the bringing an hundred guilty Persons to Punishment, will not recompence the Injury done to one who is wrongfully accus'd.

And in the zealous Prosecution of other Peoples Sins, you must ever have a just regard to the Preservation of your own Innocence. Some Sins are of that infectious Quality they catch like the Plague, and especially those of Lasciviousness in Youth, where there is a Disposition to be wrought upon: *Can a Man take Fire in his Bosom, and not be burnt?* says Solomon to this same purpose; to shew us the nature of this Temptation is such, that there is no way of Safety, but by cutting off all Opportunities of it. So that to seek Occasions of sinning your self, for the Discovery of other People, is not safe; and to gain their Consent to a Sin by any means of Allurement or Circumvention is not innocent; since this is a degree of Guilt in them, equal to Actual Sin. This will harden People in their Vices rather than work their Reformation; And there-

therefore leave all these Methods to those Evil Spirits, the common Enemies of Mankind whose proper Quality it is, first to entice People into Sin, and then upbraid and accuse them for it. This is the only Objection that is or can be made against your Endeavours: And if you take care to prevent this, you will remove all suspicion from those who are truly zealous against Vice, and forward to promote the Discouragement of it, by all fair means of Prosecution and Discovery.

And let all this be done by you as true Sons of the Church and Members of its Communion, and let no Opinion of your own Piety or Devout Performances among your Selves insinuate any Disesteem of the service of the Church, which is much more acceptable to Almighty GOD. Therefore be exact in the observance of its Customs and Constitutions, nor endeavour to be more Holy by repairing for more frequent, or purer Worship to those Congregations which have Separated from Us. You of all People can't do this without being a contradiction to your selves; for to the great Credit not only of Christianity but of the Establish't Church, you have  
made

made it appear, that People may in all respects be as Vertuous and Holy within the Bosom of the Church, as 'tis possible for them to be out of it: So that you have effectually cut off from yourselves all pretence of Separation for ever; this makes it utterly needless, and therefore without Excuse.

One thing more I would recommend to You under this Head, and that is, That in all your Designs for the promoting of Vertue and Holiness, you never abound so much in your own sense, as to decline the Advice and Concurrence of the Bishop and your respective Ministers. If you have a true *Zeal*, this is the only effectual way to have it *according to Knowledge*: But without their Guidance and Conduct, you will run into Errors before you are aware; and one Error in things of this nature is pregnant of many more. The Zealots among the Jews by assuming to themselves what did not belong to them, proceeded at last to Elect and Ordain the High-Priest, despising the Rules of Birth (says *Josepbus*) by which they were to Succeed; putting in Illiterate and Obscure Men, such as were prepar'd with Ignorance and Superstition enough to back their

their Proceedings; For having once broke in upon the Office and Priviledges of the Priesthood, they knew not where to stop.

IV. Another thing contain'd in these words is, That the Suppression of Open Scandalous Impiety, is the most effectual means of diverting GOD's Judgments from a Nation. There seem'd here to be a full purpose of GOD utterly to consume the *Israelites* in his Jealousie; and while the Number and Quality of those who defil'd themselves with the *Midianitish* Women hinder'd the Execution of the Law, the Plague took off Four and Twenty Thousand of them. But the Zeal of this Excellent Person in putting it in Execution, stopt the Plague in the midst of its Rage, and turn'd away the Wrath of GOD from the whole Congregation.

Now the Reason why this Action was of so much Power and Efficacy to prevail with GOD in all likelihood was, Either because he was one of the greatest Quality of those that were guilty, and therefore influenc'd many Others by his Example: Or else, which is not improbable, because this Couragious

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Action of his in beginning the Execution, gave occasion to the rest of the Youth to follow his Example, and clear the whole Camp of *Israel* of the Offenders. And without doubt this was the reason why *Phinehas* was afterwards sent Commander of the Army against the *Midianites*, because GOD was likelier to bless that Hand with Success which had thus led the way, and signaliz'd it self by such an Act of Exemplary Justice.

This same Method of GOD's Dealing by whole Nations, according to that visible Appearance of Piety and Open Face of Religion that is among them, is very discernable in the whole Series of GOD's Dispensations to the Jews. And if we could see the Secret Hand that manages all the Affairs of this World, we should find this to be at the bottom of them all, as the main Spring by which all Nations and Governments, all Cities and Communities undergo that great variety of Changes and Revolutions.

Now the Wisdom and the Justice of GOD in this is very Accountable by us, notwithstanding that the Good are promiscuously involv'd in the same Calamities with the Wicked. For,

I. Since

1. Since good and bad People, according to our Saviour's Similitude, grow together like the *Tares and the Wheat*, they must therefore undergo all the several Changes of Weather in common, let the Cause be what it will; *His Sun must shine, and his Rain descend upon both alike*. So that He hath no other way of dealing with whole Communities, but by sending Temporal Blessings or Judgments upon all together. And that GOD might appear Just and True in all his Dealings by the Children of Men, the Cause of these things must be something that is common to them both; and that can be only this general Appearance of Goodness, or open Permission of Scandalous Vices. For Secret Piety and Sincerity is proper only to the Good, and Rewardable in another World; And therefore as the Eternal Welfare of Men hereafter depends upon their own Secret Piety, so the Prosperity of whole Nations proceeds from the Open Profession of Religion and Morality. So that in great Strictness Men are in all senses, the true Cause of all the Misfortunes that befall them either in this World, or the next.

GOD hath no other way, I say, of Dealing with whole Nations and Societies of Men now, so as to proceed without all Exception, and preserve his Attributes inviolable. But when these little Ties and Temporary Obligations which Unite Men into Bodies here shall be Dissolv'd, and Mankind New Model'd into two Great and Opposite Parties never to mix again; then there will be full scope for the Exercise of all the Goodness of GOD upon the one, and of his just Vengeance upon the other.

2. The Judgments of GOD may very Justly come upon the Good for want of a Zealous Endeavour of Suppressing those Scandalous Vices in others. Persons may be truly Vertuous and Holy in themselves, and yet be without a good measure of Indignation at Open Impiety and Lewdness; so that they deserve to share in the Consequences of that Impiety they did not use their utmost Endeavours to suppress. And accordingly no question but the Plague swept away many of those who were not guilty of the Sin that caus'd it; and would have destroy'd many more even of those that were innocent, if this speedy Suppres-

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sion of those Vices had not prevented it.

Nay tho we shou'd suppose no want of Zeal in those that are Innocent, yet there is no Injustice in their Suffering for the Sins of others : First, Because there are no Temporal Judgments can befall them, but what are the due Reward of their own Sins ; and Secondly, Because tho they were not, but that they suffered wrongfully ; yet this may be design'd by GOD, in order to an ample Recompence hereafter : Whereas if the Bad should fail of a Reward in this Life, there is no room left for it in another World.

3. Another Reason why bare-fac'd Impiety and open Profanefs have such a Tendency to bring down Judgments upon all in Common is, Because they are a direct Affront and Challenging of GOD. Publick Scandalous Sins when they grow general become a National Quarrel with him ; and therefore lay a sort of Necessity upon GOD to vindicate his Honour, and visit a Nation while it is such, for those bold and open Defiances of Heaven, since there can be no opportunity for this hereafter.

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Besides, This of openly expressing the inward corruptness of Mens Souls seems to be accidental to the guilt, for 'tis no more than proclaiming and giving vent to what was hidden before ; and therefore we can't conceive how it can have so direct an Influence upon Mens Future State. For their greatest Misery will then be the Natural Result of their inward Depravation of Mind and Conscience ; and therefore the other seems necessarily to require some Punishment in this Life, tho' the many Evil Consequences of Scandalous Sins may hereafter be punished by a positive Act of Justice. And therefore 'tis those Open Sins which are not to be conceal'd from the knowledge of Men, such as Cursing, Swearing and Adultery, &c. for which a *Land is said to mourn.*

Hypocrisy, tho' it is a base and detestable thing, yet it seems to have some sense of GOD and Goodness left, tho' it preposterously Act contrary to them both. It is commendable in this, that 'tis ashamed of its own Deformity ; and the wearing the Mask of Religion, is a tacite Acknowledgment they would be sincerely good, if this could be had with

with the same Ease : And it shews they wou'd hide their Wickedness from GOD too, as well as from Men if it were possible. But open Debauchery, and profest Impiety renounces all the intrinsic worth of Religion ; 'tis a direct Affront to Heaven, and a Daring of GOD : And therefore when he is thus Challenged, he is constrain'd to Punish for the Justification of his Honour. But when on the contrary they appear outwardly to be Holy, the Honour of GOD is however preserv'd and the dangerous Consequences prevented. Tho' they have nothing of true Religion at the heart, yet it shews some Veneration for Him and his Laws ; which tho' it be that of Slaves and Vassals and not of True Subjects, yet 'tis not left without a Recompence proper for it.

A meer form of Godliness and empty pretence of Piety often meets with a suitable Recompence ; so that what our Saviour says of particular Hypocrites is true of greater Bodies and Communities of them, *That they have their Reward.* A famous instance of this is not out of the Memory of some yet alive ; a time when all solid Vertue, and moral Honesty was drain'd from Christianity, and  
nothing

nothing left but the outside of it; yet this was proof against all the opposition of those who had more of the substance, but too little of the outward shew and profession of it. This gave them such Success, that they overcame all Difficulties, till at last Hypocrisy assum'd the Throne, ador'd by all its Votaries; and reign'd till the Varnish came off the guilded Idol, and discovered nothing but Clay and Rottenness all within.

And now *if they had Ears to hear*, I wou'd speak something to those bold and resolute Sinners who are the occasion of all this Trouble and Charge; But they are so far *past feeling*, that none of the Terrors of God can touch them, and therefore I must leave them to other methods. I shall only mind them here (if ever they are dispos'd to consider it) that besides the proper guilt of their own sins, they will in the day of Judgment be accountable for all those Evils upon their Country, which have been the consequences of their sins in this life: and that tho' they may escape the hand of Justice here, yet Damnation expects them, and they are only Repriev'd till the Judgment of the Great Day.

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must have been very uncertain at a time when their general Lewdness, as appears by this action of *Zimri's*, out-brav'd the Laws and Magistrates, and therefore as it is *Psal. 106. This was counted to him for Righteousness thro' all Generations for evermore.*

This was a Rare and Admirable Instance of a truly generous Zeal and Publick Spirit, than which nothing is more acceptable to Almighty God ; because it places Him and his Cause uppermost in our Minds, and makes all things subservient to his Will : this is the greatest indication of a sincere love of God, and is truly the highest pitch of Virtue. Even the Heathens had a mighty sense of the excellence of this concern for the common Good, as appears from the many Brave and Generous Actions they did for their Superstition. And the wise Athenian Lawgiver being ask'd *Which was the most effectual means of preserving Justice and Equity in a City?* answered, *That those who receive no Injury by unlawful things, be equally incens'd as those who suffer by them.* And gave this as the surest sign of the decay of any Community, when every one is eagerly bent upon their own welfare, without regard to any thing beyond themselves.

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The Gospel improves and encourages this Excellent Temper, and requires such a disposition of heart, and mutual Concern for the good of one another in all its Members, as if they were but one Family ; and teaches to prefer the glory of God, above all that is near and dear to us. The description of our Saviour's Temper in the 69 Psalm, is, *That the Zeal of Gods House had eaten him up* (i.e.) the Zeal and Concern he had for the glory of GOD and his Church, even prey'd upon his Spirits.\* It follows, *And the Reproaches of them that reproached thee is fallen upon me* (i.e.) I have as quick and feeling a sense of any reproach or dishonour done to Thee, as if it were done to my self.

Let therefore the same Spirit be in us, and let us lay to heart the daily Profanations of GOD's holy Name among us, the open Reproaches of his Divine Truths, and the manifold Transgression of his Laws with a hardy Insolence and Publick Defiance. And let us not be wanting to do all that in us lies for the Glory of GOD, and the Dignity of his Laws ; at a time when we have so fair an Opportunity given us of shew-

ing our Zeal for GOD, our Indignation at the Vices and Immoralities of the Age, and to promote a General Reformation of Life and Manners.

Why Men shou'd not be as Zealous in the Execution of Laws made against Vice, as of those that are made in favour of their Temporal Interests, is hard to tell, unless it be, that they love the World better than they do GOD. And why giving of Evidence in these Cases should be more condemn'd, than in any Case of Injustice done to our selves, I know not ; there can be no Reason given, but because People are more Tender of their Worldly Concerns, than they are of the Glory of GOD. What were these good Laws made for? Nay, what have we a Religion for? Certainly not for meer shew and formality. therefore all who had any hand in making these Pious Laws, are bound to forward and promote the Execution of them, as they will defend us all from the Imputation of a Solemn National Hypocrisie. 'Tis a shame to see with what Fierceness and great Expence of Time and Money, Men will prosecute an Affront done to themselves, and yet leave all those Excellent Laws that are made against the Publick

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Reproaches of GOD's holy Name and his Religion, to lie neglected and trampled upon.

GOD be prais'd there is now a Spirit of Zeal and Fervour, answerable to that of *Phinehas* stirr'd up among us, with the true Qualifications and Temper of the Gospel; in opposition to that growing Spirit of Irreligion and Infidelity which hath bid open Defiance to GOD and Goodness. If we Cherish and Encourage it, we may promise our selves the Victory in the End: For true Vertue is then only in danger when 'tis attack'd with Methods of Treachery, and 'tis never safer than when it hath declar'd open War with Vice. The contest is now with Mens Vices, and not with their Opinions; 'tis not the Interest of a Party, but the common Cause of Christianity. And 'tis a Noble Enterprize, for by removing these Immoralities, we strike at the very Root of *Socinianism*, which is now grown a many-Headed Monster, and improv'd into a strange variety of Profane and Atheistical Principles; all which look one way, and agree to make a Body against all reveal'd Religion, and the Mysteries of the Gospel. 'Tis a tedious way about to grapple with every  
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one of them singly, and by this means we find they multiply upon us : But this is to cut them off all at once, for make People but truly Moral Men, and then 'tis easy to make them Good and Believing Christians.

Let not therefore any of those, who are the more immediate Undertakers of this Good Work, be discourag'd with any Opposition they meet with ; they have but Two great Difficulties to struggle with, and by the Blessing of God they will overcome them both ; The *Jealousies* of good People, and the *Fury* of those that are prosecuted.

As for the Suspensions and Jealousies of good People, they will all wear off by degrees, when they consider what have been already the good Effects of your Zeal for GOD & Goodness. When they consider that face of Piety and Devotion which of late is visible in our Publick Worship in the Congregation ; the great increase in the number of Communicants in all our Churches ; the sensible Decrease of Publick and Scandalous Vice in this City, &c. Let them but lay these things, which are a substantial present advantage to our Church and Nation,

Nation, against those groundless surmises of some ill Consequences they know not when, nor how. Let us but thorowly reform the Vices of this Age, and that is the surest way of preventing ill Consequences in the next. And indeed what Consequences can be more formidable then that of open Cursing and Swearing, Adultery and Whoredom, and all that Impudent and Bare-fac'd Impiety which, with the Encouragement of the Magistrates and Contributions of good People, they may be the happy means of suppressing.

As to the other Difficulty you are to grapple with, you must expect the work will not be very easy; for the Rage and Fury of Persons crost and disturb'd in their Vices, is very well likened by *Solomon* to the fierceness of a *Bear when she is rob'd of her Whelps*. But comfort yourselves with this, that they have no other Objection against you, but what the Devils made to our Saviour, *That you come to torment them before their time*.

Do you however appear as resolute for the Cause of God, as they do for that of the Devil; The World is come to that pass, that it is impossible to be truly  
Good

Good without Courage and Resolution. Let us but remain Undaunted, and this Impudent Impiety will loose Ground dayly, till the Numbers of its Votaries grow so small that they will be asham'd of it. The worst of Men have a secret Awe and Veneration for Vertue and Holiness; there is so much of GOD in it, that they can no more raze out all Veneration for it in their Minds, then they can the Existence of a Deity : And there is so much of the innate quality of the Devil in all Vice and Wickedness, that if we do resist it manfully *it will fly from us*, and we shall surely be Conquerors in the end.

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